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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 005025

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

USDOC 4520/ITA/MAC/ONE/PTANOS
DEPARTMENT FOR E FOR LARSON
DEPARTMENT FOR EB FOR WAYNE
ATHENS FOR TSA FOR MONTGOMERY
FRANKFURT FOR TSA FOR KLUKOWSKI
CPA FOR WILLIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: SKIES CLEARING FOR RJ?

REF: A. AMMAN 4249

[B](#). AMMAN 3654

[C](#). STATE 162415

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

[1](#). (SBU) COMMENT: Royal Jordanian Airline officials have apparently taken on board strong messages regarding airline security, service to Iraq, and other issues delivered by the Ambassador June 16 (REF B). A successful visit by a follow-up TSA inspection team and an informal discussion between RJ and CPA aviation officials indicate a strengthened commitment to security as well as flexibility regarding potential service between Amman and Baghdad. These encouraging developments may bode well for RJ's hopes to increase its regional presence and may lead to a timely relief of the bottleneck caused by lack of available seats out of Baghdad (REF A). END COMMENT

MESSAGE RECEIVED: TSA CALLS THE SHOTS

[2](#). (SBU) TSA Senior Aviation Security Inspectors Albert Klukowski and John Nipper conducted an assessment of Queen Alia International Airport and Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) July 20-25. The visit was a follow-up to a disappointing TSA inspection in early June during which TSA officials found RJ to be largely "out of compliance" with security procedures regarding transit passengers, air marshals, and the publication and dissemination of a general security manual to RJ staff. At the conclusion of the June visit, the inspectors gave RJ officials mid-July deadlines to "get in line" with TSA standards.

[3](#). (SBU) Apart from some hiccups, the July visit went smoothly. The airline instituted a policy notifying TSA officials daily of changes in sky marshal personnel; developed sophisticated software to screen transit passengers against the "no fly" list; and produced a manual of security procedures, all ahead of deadline. In addition, RJ created separate departments for safety and security with dedicated management for each. The July inspection revealed minor problems in cargo and aircraft pre-boarding inspection, but these were quickly rectified by RJ personnel, who themselves demonstrated a commitment to cooperation and security that had been missing on previous inspections. While he recommended continued follow-up and monitoring of RJ and airport security operations, Klukowski said the team was extremely satisfied with the visit and that all parties appeared to be in compliance with TSA policy and procedures.

RJ: WE ARE READY TO HELP

[4](#). (SBU) RJ CEO Samer Majali told Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Aviation Advisor Frank Willis during a courtesy call on July 31 that RJ was "ready to help" ease the bottleneck on air travel in and out of Baghdad (REF A). While Majali said he hoped that RJ could eventually serve some role in the reconstruction of an Iraqi national airline, he realized that such a decision would be made in the long term. For now, he said, RJ would be pleased to offer services "wherever you want", whether as a charter or commercially with an established schedule. He added that the Jordanian Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) could offer immediate technical assistance to Iraqi civil officials to formulate aviation policy similar to Jordan's, one that is modeled on American Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) procedures. Majali said he was hoping to hear soon that RJ had been approved by the CPA but understood that actual service, once slated to begin July 15, could not resume until the security situation at and around the airport had improved.

[5](#). (SBU) Willis thanked Majali for his interest and patience, and said that his visit was purely exploratory, to enable him

to get a sense of things on the ground. He said that at present, he was unable to make any commitments on behalf of the CPA. That said, Willis agreed with Majali that the decision on a national carrier would be made by an Iraqi government and not by the CPA. He said that security near Baghdad International Airport was still an issue and that there was not yet an agreed date when commercial service might resume.

16. (SBU) Willis returned to the question of a future national airline for Iraq, acknowledging that RJ's role in an Iraqi airline could take a number of forms, and asked Majali which of those roles RJ might be open to. Majali said the airline would consider anything, from wet leases (the Iraqi airline would use RJ aircraft, pilots and crew but operate under an Iraqi brand) to a joint venture with an Iraqi firm to an arrangement to block space on a new airline (RJ would sell seats on the Iraqi carrier under the RJ name). Willis said that an RJ-Iraqi joint venture would be viewed positively by the CPA. Majali said he was even prepared to shift half of RJ's fleet to Baghdad at an appropriate time, and would even paint the Iraqi carrier's colors on RJ planes. He said RJ could even evolve into a regional carrier operating out of both Amman and Baghdad, as well as provide service to other destinations in Iraq, such as Basrah and Mosul. He said that although he was aware that a groundhandling contract for Baghdad International had been awarded to a Singaporean company, his airline could offer immediate groundhandling assistance and training if needed. Willis said the contract awarded to the Singaporean company had been "put on hold" for the time being.

DECISION ON BOEING/AIRBUS STILL ON HOLD

17. (SBU) Majali said that RJ has "frozen" a decision on renewing its fleet through purchase or lease of Boeing or Airbus short haul jets until a putative Iraqi carrier determines its needs. He said that originally the plan of fleet renewal had been put on hold due to the war, but that the airline now wanted to move ahead. He said that it did not make sense, however, to go forward now if it had to make other arrangements, such as the purchase or leasing of smaller aircraft, that would be more suitable for service to Iraq.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Majali appears to have moved away from a direct (and politically damaging) linkage of a prospective purchase of Boeing aircraft to the Baghdad route (REF B). Nonetheless, behind his, and RJ's, flexibility is a strong desire to become a regional carrier that serves Baghdad and beyond. A renewed commitment to security, qualified flight and support personnel, and a Western-focused route system suggest a logical short-term role for RJ that may lead to something more substantial once an Iraqi government is established.
HALE